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ABSTRACT

The questionnaire in a study of perceived mass media effects included nine statements about the possible negative effects of the mass media, to which respondents could agree, disagree, or indicate "no opinion," and an open-ended question that asked the subjects what effects the mass media had on them personally. Most of the 340 respondents showed general agreement with the nine statements, especially with those about the harmful effects of advertising; yet their responses to the open-ended question showed that they are not willing to admit that mass media have any power over their personal lives. The researchers interpret the apparent discrepancy in opinions as showing that people use the media as a scapegoat for societal problems, explaining that the elicited discrepancy in beliefs allows people to consider themselves somehow better than other people. (RL)

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Public Opinion on Mass Media Effects: Perceived Societal Effects and Perceived Personal Effects

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As most social scientists are aware, research methodology has not yet progressed to the stage which will enable science to adequately verify the magnitude and type of impact mass media actually have upon society. Nevertheless, there is some indication that the general public may consider the impact of the mass media to be established fact. As suggested by Davis[1], such public opinion might be partially attributable to exposure to over-simplified social criticism such as that disseminated by the popular press.

Throughout the years, opinion polls reported in the popular press have documented a growing sense of cynicism toward the mass media. Studies have shown the public to be concerned with the impact of the media in such areas as violence, sex, and advertising. Haller[2] reported that 80 percent of the college students he surveyed agreed that advertising persuades people to buy things they do not need and that 60 percent agreed that advertising persuades people to buy things they do not want. Greyser and Reece[3] found businessmen also agreed that advertising persuades people to buy things they do not need and that it has an unhealthy influence on children. Lewels[4] also found such critical attitudes toward the media and their effects when he attempted to factor analyze his respondents into categories of critics.

Although such findings are not startling, they are difficult

to reconcile with the apparent observation that few people admit to the mass media affecting them personally. Davis[5], for instance, reported that his subjects overwhelmingly denied the influence of TV advertising on their buying behavior. O'Keefe[6] found that smokers reported very little behavior change as a result of anti-smoking commercials, although it is interesting to note that non-smokers thought such campaigns were effective. Fields and Schuman[7] reported that respondents tended to exhibit rather liberal racial attitudes compared with the attitudes these same respondents predicted of a more "generalized other."

This same sort of inconsistency may be prevalent with respect to public opinion on mass media effects. While most people may be quite willing to believe in the overwhelming manipulative power of the mass media to affect society in general, they may be more reluctant to admit to such effects personally. To the extent that this phenomenon occurs, research on the effects of the mass media may derive different results depending upon whether questions are worded to apply to respondents' personal lives or to society in general.

In obtaining critical responses toward the media, Lewels[8] employed statements which could apply to the more generalized other--society in general. Bower's massive study[9] which measured the public's reaction to television utilized a high percentage of questions which related to subjects' personal use of and reaction to the medium. Perhaps not surprisingly, under such circumstances

Bower's questions did not produce particularly negative reactions toward television. To the extent that such methodological considerations dictate attitudinal responses about the media, studies such as the factor analyses done by Levy[10] and Robinson[11] which mix both personal and general questions about the media may need to consider the possibility that a mixture of this type may produce methodological rather than real differences.

This researcher's personal observations have failed to yield corroborating evidence of manipulative effects of the mass media. While many may agree that the media are producing such societal effects, virtually no one admits to such personal influence by the media. The purpose of this exploratory study was to examine the contrast between perceptions of societal impact and personal influence suggested by this observation. In particular, the study sought to determine whether those who believe in the manipulative power of the mass media will also admit to such media effects on their own personal behavior. If not, what type of effects might they admit to? In addition, this study attempted to explore the justification people might have for any apparent discrepancies in their beliefs regarding societal and personal effects of the mass media.

METHODOLOGY

As a preliminary project, the investigator asked 73 people of various ages and backgrounds to express their opinions about the mass media. An informal analysis of these open-ended responses revealed nine particular statements occurring with considerable frequency. All nine of these statements suggested possible harmful or manipulative effects of the mass media and were expressed negatively,[12] indicating opposition to and frequently concern for the effects of the media in these areas. The nine statements later were listed in a random order on an opinion questionnaire with three possible responses -- i.e., "agree," disagree," and "no opinion." (These statements are itemized in Table 1.)

Using a cluster sample method, four graduate students trained specifically for this study conducted interviews on street corners and outside of shopping centers located in a Midwestern metropolitan area of 1.2 million people. First, respondents were asked to respond to the list of nine opinion items which the interviewer read. Then, each respondent was asked the following question: "What effects have the mass media had on you personally?" Finally, respondents were asked to participate in a ten or fifteen minute interview. The purpose of these interviews was to determine how the respondents justified any discrepancies between their beliefs about the effects of the mass media on society in general and their beliefs about the effects the mass media had on their own personal lives.[13]

RESULTS

Three hundred forty interviews were completed with respondents whose ages ranged from 18 to 71 years. One hundred seventy-five were males (51.5%), and 165 were females (48.5%). Only 36 respondents, 17 males and 19 females, agreed to participate in the longer in-depth interview. A two-tailed *t*-test revealed no significant difference ($p > .20$) in mean scores on the original nine negatively worded items between these 36 respondents and the rest of the sample ($t = .471$, d.f. = 338).

As expected, the respondents did display a general agreement with the nine negatively worded statements on the questionnaire. Eighty percent of the respondents indicated agreement with the nine items as a whole. When treating the three possible responses of "agree," "no opinion," and "disagree" as an interval scale and weighting such responses with 3 points, 2 points, and 1 point respectively, 80% (272) of the respondents scored above 18 points (the mid-point) when their scores were summed across the nine items. Only 17.9% (61) of the respondents scored below the mid-point, while 2.1% (7) of the respondents scored exactly 18 points. In addition, as indicated by the totals in Table 1, of all the responses given to the nine items by the 340 respondents (3060 in all),

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INSERT TABLE 1 HERE

.....

66.1% indicated agreement with the negatively worded opinion items

concerning the effects of the mass media on society in general. Only 20.6% of the responses indicated disagreement, while 13.3% indicated no opinion.

As is evident from the "agree" column in Table 1, the amount of agreement with any single item ranged from a low of 48.8% of the respondents agreeing with item #3 to a high of 78.8% of the respondents agreeing with item #7. The two items dealing with the effects of violence, crime, and sex in the mass media (items #3 and #6) received the lowest amount of agreement (48.8% and 50.9% respectively), although there was still considerably more agreement than disagreement with them. The two statements which received the highest amount of agreement involved the harmful effects of advertising in the mass media. Both item #7 and item #4 received over 78% agreement from respondents. And item #8, which also dealt with the harmful effects of advertising, ranked fifth in amount of agreement with 69.4% of the respondents agreeing. Item #2 and item #5 which referred to the harmful effects of the mass media on children also received considerable agreement (73.2% and 67.0% respectively).

While respondents in this survey did tend to agree with statements regarding the manipulative effects of the mass media on society in general, they would not admit to manipulative effects of the mass media on their own personal lives. The distribution of types of responses to the open-ended questions is reported in Table 2.

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INSERT TABLE 2 HERE

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The data reported in Table 2 support the main hypothesis that most respondents would not report any harmful manipulative effects of the media on themselves.[14] Only 44 respondents (12.9%) could cite any personal harmful effects of the mass media. Furthermore, a representative list of the harmful effects cited (see Appendix A) indicates only that these respondents were willing to blame the mass media for their own apathy, laziness, or lack of self-control.

While only 44 respondents could cite personal harmful effects, 118 (34.7%) of the respondents answered the open-ended question by mentioning personal beneficial effects. The beneficial effects cited usually referred to the power of the media to provide respondents with information in various matters such as news, special events, weather, and the market place.

The majority of the respondents cited neither harmful nor beneficial personal effects of the media. As can be seen from the data reported in Table 2, 178 (52.4%) of the respondents comprise the "other" category. This category included all respondents whose responses would not fit into either of the first two categories because they could not, or would not, cite personal effects. Furthermore, this category is possible to divide into exactly four subcategories which account for every response of this nature to the question of personal effects. The largest subcategory included 92 respondents (27.0% of the entire sample) who could not think of any effects which the mass media had on their personal lives. Respondents in this category answered the question of personal effects with "I don't know," "I can't think of any," "None that I can recall,", etc.

The second largest subcateogry of "other" responses included 40 respondents (11.8% of the sample) who did not cite personal effects,but mentioned effects of the mass media on society instead. Such responses (see Appendix B) are interesting since the question did ask quite specifically for effects of the media on respondents' personal lives.

The third subcategory of "other" responses contains respondents who did not cite personal effects but made a point of noting that the mass media do not affect them personally. Twenty-five respondents (7.4% of the sample) comprised this category. The wording of their particular responses seemed to indicate that they consider themselves too clever to be manipulated by the mass media. (See Appendix C.)

The fourth subcategory of "other" responses included 21 respondents (6.2% of the sample) who not only stated that the mass media do not affect them personally but also suggested that they are unlike others in this regard. This subcategory involves a combination of the second and third subcategories. Respondents not only suggested that they are not themselves influenced by the media, but made a point of suggesting that other people are. Such responses (see Appendix D) may indicate that these respondents consider themselves better than, or more clever than, the average person with respect to the effects of the mass media.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that people tend to agree with negatively worded statements about the effects of the mass media upon society in general. The greatest amount of agreement was obtained with respect to the negative effects of mass media advertising upon society. Considerable agreement also was obtained with respect to the negative effects of the media upon children. The lease amount of agreement occurred with statements about the harmful effects of sex and violence.[15]

The data also clearly support the hypothesis that people will not admit to any manipulative effect of the media on their own personal lives, even though they will agree with negatively worded statements regarding the potential manipulative power of the mass media over society. Such a discrepancy may seem difficult to justify. If a person does not believe that the mass media can manipulate him personally, how can he agree that the media have the power to manipulate society in general? While treatment of this issue by the popular press may account for the apparent belief in the manipulative power of the media over society, it is difficult to understand how respondents could accept such information when it is contradicted by their perceptions of mass media influence in their own lives.

Three explanations are possible for such an apparent discrepancy within an individual's belief system. One explanation involves the

contention that the discrepancy is not a real one. That is, people do not really believe that the effects of the media on society are any greater than the minimal effects of the media on their own personal lives. Such an explanation must be rejected on the basis of the data reported in this study as well as on the basis of the findings of many earlier opinion polls which suggested that people are indeed concerned about the manipulative power of the mass media over society.

A second explanation for the apparent discrepancy within individual belief systems also relies on the contention that such a discrepancy is not real. This explanation suggests that people do believe in the manipulative power of the mass media both over society in general and over their own lives but are simply reluctant to admit to the latter. In effect, such a contention suggests that the apparent discrepancy in this study is methodologically induced. Respondents may have been self-concious about indicting themselves as members of some easily influenced mindless mass when they had to answer questions about their own personal reactions to the media. The data presented neither offer support for nor clearly necessitate rejection of such an explanation. However, if the apparent discrepancy obtained in this study were due to a concern by the respondents about what the interviewers might think of them, one might reasonably expect these respondents to admit to all sorts of harmful media effects on their own personal lives simply to avoid the obvious inconsistency in their responses.[16] This study was designed to avoid the possibility of the discrepancy being methodologically induced by asking the open-ended question last. If there

were any attempt by respondents to "keep up appearances" it should probably have reduced the discrepancy, not increased it. Thus, while it may be sound advice for future studies to carefully examine such opinion items with respect to second versus third person wording, it is primarily because the different types of responses obtained reflect a real discrepancy rather than simply a methodological one.

Furthermore, if respondents really were simply trying to hide the belief that the media had any manipulative power over their own lives, this should have become apparent during the in-depth interviews. It did not. None of the 36 respondents who submitted to the lengthy interviews took the position that perhaps the mass media did have some manipulative power over their personal lives. The critic might suggest that this could be expected since those people who were the most likely to submit to an in-depth interview may have been those respondents who showed the least amount of agreement with the negatively worded opinion items. Perhaps such people would not feel threatened by the in-depth interview as would their fellow respondents who were more inconsistent with their responses by agreeing with the opinion items and by failing to cite personal effects of the media. However, as noted, the t-test comparing the mean opinion score on the nine negatively worded items for those who did agree to the in-depth interview with the mean opinion score on these items for those who refused the in-depth interview revealed no significant difference between the two groups. Furthermore, the in-depth interviews did

not reveal any suggestion that these volunteers believed the media to have much manipulative power over their own personal lives. Therefore, consistency of belief systems probably cannot predict willingness to submit to the in-depth interview in this study.

The third explanation for the apparent discrepancy in opinions does receive at least tentative support from the open-ended data already reported as well as from the in-depth interviews. This explanation suggests that the discrepancy is a real one and that the discrepant opinions as well as the discrepancy itself may serve a purpose for respondents. The belief that the mass media are capable of manipulating society in general may provide people with a handy scapegoat for societal problems, a situation which may then absolve the individual from any perceived responsibility to seek solutions for such problems. Of course, this survey does not supply any direct evidence to support this particular contention. Nevertheless, it does provide some indication that people may use the media as a scapegoat for their own laziness, apathy, or lack of self-control. The types of harmful effects of the media on their own personal lives which only a few respondents could cite do suggest that some degree of scapegoating may be practiced. (See Appendix A.)

The other categories of open-ended responses may offer at least some inferential support for the contention that the discrepancy in beliefs itself may serve a useful purpose for respondents. The belief that the media affect others differently than oneself may allow a person to consider himself "better than" most people. Of course, in order for this sort of rationalization to be internally effective,

a person must convince himself that not only is he not affected by the mass media, but that others are. The manner in which some of the respondents in this study answered the question about media effects on their own personal lives in terms of media effects on society (see Appendix B) may suggest a need of these people to reaffirm their belief in such societal effects. Furthermore, a number of respondents seemed to be concerned with convincing the interviewer that the media did not affect them personally (see Appendix C). Some respondents even directly indicated that they, unlike others who were perhaps not so clever, were not affected by the mass media (see Appendix D). While such evidence for the contention that the discrepancy itself may serve a purpose for respondents is not conclusive, it does appear that some respondents may be using their apparently discrepant beliefs to suggest that they are somehow "better than" other people or society in general.

The in-depth interviews also tended to result in respondents attempting to justify the apparent discrepancy in beliefs by using the argument that they are different from most people. (For some typical examples of interview dialogue, see Appendix E.) Respondents seemed to feel that, even though they are not personally affected by the media to any great extent, quite a few less fortunate people are.

Subsequent research needs to examine the role of the "better than" phenomenon in comparison to the usefulness of the mass media as scapegoats. In addition, more work is needed to explore the importance of certain methodological considerations (e.g., the order of the personal and societal effects questions, etc.).

SUMMARY

This exploratory survey found that people do indeed tend to agree with negatively worded statements regarding the manipulative effects of the mass media upon society. Such agreement is particularly strong with respect to the potentially harmful effects of mass media advertising. However, these same people are not willing to admit that the mass media have any such power over their own personal lives. The data support the explanation that such a discrepancy in beliefs may serve the purpose of allowing people to consider themselves somehow "better than" other people.

NOTES

1. Richard H. Davis, "Television and the Older Adult," Journal of Broadcasting, 15 (1971), 153-159.

2. Thomas F. Haller, "What Students Think of Advertising," Journal of Advertising Research, 14 (1974), 33-38.

3. Stephen A. Greyser and Bonnie B. Reece, "Businessmen Look Hard at Advertising," Harvard Business Review, 49 (1971), May-June, 18-26.

4. Joe Lewels, Jr., "Critical Attitudes Toward the Media," Educational Broadcasting Review, 6 (1972), 339-349.

5. Davis, loc. cit.

6. M. Timothy O'Keefe, "The Anti-smoking Commercials: A Study of Television's Impact on Behavior," Public Opinion Quarterly, 35 (1971), 242-248.

7. James M. Fields and Howard Schuman, "Public Beliefs About the Beliefs of the Public," Public Opinion Quarterly, 40 (1976), 427-448.

8. Lewels, loc. cit.

9. Robert T. Bower, Television and the Public (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973).

10. Mark R. Levy, "Experiencing Television News," Journal of Communication, 27 (1977), 112-117.

11. Deanna Campbell Robinson, "Television/Film Attitudes of Upper-Middle Class Professionals," Journal of Broadcasting, 19 (1975), 195-209.

12. The fact that all nine of the opinion items on the questionnaire were worded negatively could be cause for concern. However, since the preliminary research upon which this questionnaire was built did result in such negative statements, rewording some of them to positively support the media might constitute an attempt to reshape rather than measure public opinion. Furthermore, while such negative statements might produce a response set which could result in subjects feeling more negative toward the media when they are later asked about the

effects of the media on their own personal lives, this should load the survey results against, rather than in favor of, the main hypothesis that people will not cite manipulative effects of the media with respect to their own personal lives.

13. Although it was not expected that very many respondents would be willing to take the time to discuss such matters in detail with the interviewers, it was felt that even a small sample of respondents may provide enough information to suggest a tentative explanation for the findings of this exploratory study or at least to provide some direction for future research.

14. Intercoder reliability for the categorization of responses in Table 2 was .98.

15. It should be noted that the survey was conducted in the Autumn of 1976, prior to the more recent concern over sex on television.

16. One might maintain that this is just what those respondents who admitted to some harmful effects were doing. However, it should be noted that only 12.9% of the respondents actually did mention any harmful effects and that these effects could not really be categorized as manipulative in nature.

TABLE 1

FREQUENCY OF RESPONSES TO THE NINE ORIGINAL NEGATIVELY WORDED OPINION ITEMS

	Items	Agree	Disagree	No Opinion
1.	The mass media have produced a society in which the average person rarely questions what he sees or hears.	183 (53.8%)	132 (38.8%)	25 (7.4%)
2.	Children, even more than adults, are being manipulated by today's mass media.	249 (73.2%)	48 (14.2%)	43 (12.6%)
3.	Exposure to crime, violence, and sex in the mass media tends to result in acceptance of such forms of behavior.	166 (48.8%)	124 (36.5%)	50 (14.7%)
4.	Mass media advertising brainwashes many people into buying things they can't afford and don't need.	267 (78.6)	41 (12.0%)	32 (9.4%)
5.	Mass media frequently distract children from other activities which would be much better for them.	228 (67.0%)	54 (15.9%)	58 (17.1%)
6.	Exposure to certain types of mass media content such as pornography or violence tends to increase the incidents of such behavior in society.	173 (50.9%)	90 (26.5%)	77 (22.6%)
7.	The mass media must be extremely persuasive forces or the advertisers wouldn't spend so much money advertising them.	268 (78.8%)	39 (11.5%)	33 (9.7%)
8.	Mass media advertising has warped our value system by placing too much emphasis on material goods for success.	236 (69.4%)	58 (17.1%)	46 (13.5%)
9.	Too many people allow the mass media to do their thinking for them.	253 (74.4%)	43 (12.7%)	44 (12.9%)
	Totals	2023 (66.1%)	629 (20.6%)	408 (13.3%)

TABLE 2

FREQUENCIES FOR CATEGORIES OF OPEN-END RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION CONCERNING THE EFFECTS OF THE MASS MEDIA ON THE RESPONDENTS' PERSONAL LIVES

Category		Frequency
Personal harmful effects noted	44 (12.9%)	
Personal beneficial effects noted	118 (34.7%)	
Other	178 (52.4%)	
Cannot think of any personal effects		92 (27.0%)
State that the mass media do have harmful effects on society		40 (11.8%)
Actually state that the mass media do not affect them personally		25 (7.4%)
Actually state that they, unlike others, are not harmed or manipulated by the mass media		21 (6.2%)

APPENDIX A

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES INDICATING PERSONAL HARMFUL EFFECTS OF THE MASS MEDIA

"The media have made me apathetic to most problems of others due to oversaturation with them."

"Television seems to take the place of talking and enjoying each other's company. Communication seems to break down."

"The mass media caused me to cut down on my social life due to preoccupation with TV, radio, stereo, etc."

"The mass media have made me cut down on reading that I would be doing."

"TV caused me to get poor grades in school once or twice."

"In news and certain TV shows, it makes me take a very pessimistic outlook on things--that society is just deteriorating. It makes me just give up on society."

"I rely on TV news to get my information because it takes so little time. This is a bad idea, but it's convenient."

"Mass media have made me gain weight because the food advertisements make me hungry."

"TV has taken up, or should I say wasted, a lot of my time."

"Exposure to television has made me somewhat lazy and inhibits me from doing other creative activities."

APPENDIX B

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS WHICH STATE THAT THE MASS MEDIA DO HAVE HARMFUL EFFECTS ON SOCIETY

"It is a persuasive force. TV can convince people to buy things that they might not have otherwise."

"Television has a frightening impact on children; whereas, a newspaper's effect is almost nil."

"The mass media provide a stimulus to the public as a whole which can be disastrous."

"Mass media have contributed to prolonging the ills of society. By way of televised entertainment, every form of perversion and evil is given free advertisement."

"They make people lazy."

"They put people into a lull that results in a false sense of security."

"They tend to make everyone have the same thoughts and feelings on any current topic."

"They definitely shape people's opinions on politics and government."

"TV has alienated many people by reporting too much crime."

APPENDIX C

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS WHICH ACTUALLY STATE THAT THE MASS MEDIA DO NOT AFFECT THE RESPONDENT PERSONALLY

"I don't really listen and take into account what's in the newspaper or on television."

"I don't believe everything I hear on the media."

"TV shows have very little influence on me."

"The only effect the mass media have had on me is that I never believe things I hear over radio and TV."

"The media have unsuccessfully attempted to persuade me to become more oriented toward civil rights."

APPENDIX D

REPRESENTATIVE RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION OF PERSONAL EFFECTS WHICH INDICATE THAT RESPONDENTS FEEL THAT THEY UNLIKE OTHERS ARE NOT AFFECTED BY THE MASS MEDIA

"One thing I have not seen in myself is any effect of the crime and violence on the media. Although this affects some people, it does not affect me."

"As a result of media coverage of the Watergate affair, 44% of the American people still believe that Nixon helped plan the break-in. They believe this despite the fact that not one person (not even John Dean) has said this to be true."

"Television, in particular, presents a distorted picture of reality. The real world differs from what you see on TV. The good guys don't always win. And not everybody sails happily into the sunset to live happily ever after as they do on television. I think people tend to think their lives will turn out this way and are surprised when, in fact, it doesn't happen."

"I don't feel the media have had any great effect on me personally, but the media do touch everyone in some way or another. Just by the fact that all of those people are exposed to radio, TV, and advertising, there must be some sort of persuasion that occurs."

"The mass media make me wonder just how stupid people can be. The ridiculous advertisements on radio and TV and the numerous sickening records playing on AM radio never fail to find buyers. I guess if people keep hearing or seeing the same thing over and over, they finally give in and buy it."

APPENDIX E

TYPICAL EXAMPLES OF INTERVIEW DIALOGUE

Interviewer: Does TV violence have any effect on you?

Respondent: No bad effects. It only badly affects the weak-minded that watch--people who want to make some sort of an impression on others, attention getters.

Interviewer: Do you know any of these "attention getters?"

Respondent: I've heard of them. I don't know them.

. . .

Interviewer: Does advertising have any effect on the average person?

Respondent: Oh yes.

Interviewer: Who does it affect?

Respondent: Just about everybody.

Interviewer: Does it affect you?

Respondent: No. I don't believe them. They don't convince me. It affects others though. You know, the guy next door.

. . .

Interviewer: Can TV or any other mass medium influence your behavior?

Respondent: No. Well, I don't think so. No.

Interviewer: Why not?

Respondent: Because it may inform me, but it's not going to change my way of life. I'm not as stupid as some people.

. . .

Interviewer: How do you reconcile the fact that the effects you feel the media have on the public don't also influence you?

Respondent: I guess I feel that I am a more discriminating viewer than most people.

Interviewer: Why do you think this is the case?

Respondent: Because I am a little more educated and maybe a little more intelligent than the average viewer.

. . .

Interviewer: How do you really feel about today's mass media?

Respondent: Well, they cause a lot of trouble. But television is the real culprit because so many people watch it and believe what they see.

Interviewer: Who are these "so many people" you speak of?

Respondent: Just the average people.

Interviewer: Do you consider yourself one of the "average people?"

Respondent: Not really.

Interviewer: Do your friends or members of your family fall into this group of "average people?"

Respondent: No. I guess I'm really referring to those people with less education and perhaps lower income than most of my friends have.

. . .

Interviewer: And even though the media do not affect you to any great degree, you do feel that they affect other people significantly?

Respondent: Well, just look at our younger generation. They were discontent. They were always searching to find themselves because TV has led them to hold all kinds of strange ideas about the world and what it means to be successful. In order to be "somebody" you have to be adventurous and aggressive. You have to always be on the move. This is what TV has taught them. So they turn to drugs. They reject authority. They shack up together for the weekend. Even my own grandchildren have become sassy. They've learned all kinds of inappropriate things from TV. My oldest grandchild even told my husband to "sit on it."

. . .

Interviewer: Would you ever let a commercial on TV convince you to buy something you don't need?

Respondent: I think that happens every day to millions of people. But I don't think I'm one of them. I'm aware of how much TV can affect us, so I'm very careful about it.